

NINA CANELL: SLIGHT HEAT OF THE EYELID

MOTHER'S TANKSTATION, DUBLIN
27 FEBRUARY - 5 APRIL

More than usual this time, stepping into Mother's Tankstation feels like stepping inside a convoluted mechanism, something which visitors are fearful of upsetting, not sure whether their presence will somehow disturb its intricate, inscrutable operations; or worse still, stir it from its wheezy, benign slumber into a wrathful wakefulness. The notion of a troubled hibernation plays a key role in Irish-based Swedish artist Nina Canell's solo show, presenting itself, perhaps, as a way to apprehend rhythms too spacious, or instincts or compulsions too deeply buried, to grasp in any other form.

Sound is the principal and most subtle material in use, even if it is hardly the first to break surface. The gallery is littered with more tangible stuff: breeze blocks, electric motors, a decommissioned keyboard, neon and fluorescent tubes, foam rubber, fragments of shattered mirror, a small pile of coal and an accompanying washbowl of sooty water. The objects are arranged in little suites, a shape or a colour radiating or echoing from one to the next, sometimes echoing within themselves, as in *Dead Heat* (all works 2008), where a small branch is arranged on a concrete platform beside a replica of itself in pink neon. Many of the pieces are animated, although enlisting that term is decidedly overstating the case: in Canell's repertoire animation is never a matter of gravity and follow-through, but of persistent minor twitches and lowercase readjustments.

Eventually the insistence of the sonic material usurps the bric-a-brac, despite the gentleness with which patterns of sound disperse and re-form around the gallery space, hinting that attention is called for elsewhere. The soundtrack for a video of the artist's grandfather shovelling some squelching bogscap (*Digging a Hole*) wanders off down a long wire through the gallery, only for its minimal slurpings to reemerge, hammered flat sonically, from an enormous horn speaker. If for a moment your attention rests on a construction in which a wind chime is periodically worried by an electric motor (*Nerve*), a whirr across the gallery, mixed occasionally with a sweet, random burst of birdsong, will keep you from succumbing to its aleatory melody.

Nina Canell's radical poesy gives its attention to strict systems that interlock in ways that approach random. Despite having a logic and consistency of some sort on their side, her ideas are always likely to take sudden detours, delivering the unexpected as though it were the most natural thing in the world. Occasionally this can come across as a little evasive. But that apparent randomness may, of course, simply be the result of our inability to actively process complexity. It is not a flaw, just the limit of our little system of systems. *Luke Clancy*



Slight Heat of the Eyelid, 2008
(installation view). Courtesy
Mother's Tankstation, Dublin